

IN THE CLAIMS:

Kindly cancel claim 14.

15. (Amended) An isolated DNA encoding a protein having an amino acid sequence as set forth in SEQ ID NO: 2.

16. (Amended) An isolated DNA encoding a protein comprising an amino acid sequence set forth in SEQ ID NO: 2 in which one to several amino acids have been deleted, substituted or added, the protein being specifically expressed in differentiated chondrocytes versus dedifferentiated chondrocytes, and the protein being such that

1) the amino acid sequence of a portion of the protein corresponding to an amino acid sequence ranging from the 1st to 374th amino acids in SEQ ID NO: 2 in the sequence listing has homology of 85% or more to the amino acid sequence ranging from the 1st to 374th amino acids in the SEQ ID NO: 2,

(2) the amino acid sequence of a portion of the protein corresponding to an amino acid sequence ranging from the 544th to 737th amino acids in SEQ ID NO: 2 in the sequence listing has homology of 85% or more to the amino acid sequence ranging from the 544th to 737th amino acids in the SEQ ID NO: 2, and

(3) the amino acid sequence of a portion of the protein corresponding to an amino acid sequence ranging from the 764th to 854th amino acids in SEQ ID NO: 2 in the

sequence listing has homology of 85% or more to the amino acid sequence ranging from the 764th to 854th amino acids in the SEQ ID NO: 2.

17. (Amended) An isolated gene comprising DNA shown in the following (a) or (b):

(a) DNA having a nucleotide sequence ranging from the 49th to 3,183rd bases in a nucleotide sequence set forth in SEQ ID NO: 1; and

(b) DNA which is hybridized under stringent conditions with DNA having a nucleotide sequence ranging from the 49th to 3,183rd bases in a nucleotide sequence set forth in SEQ ID NO: 1, and which encodes a protein specifically expressed in differentiated chondrocytes as compared to dedifferentiated chondrocytes, wherein stringent conditions are defined as those conditions which permit hybridization of DNA's having a homology of 80% or more to SEQ ID NO: 1, but at which nucleic acids having lower homology do not hybridize.

32. (Amended) A kit for distinguishing a differentiated chondrocyte from a dedifferentiated chondrocyte comprising at least one of the nucleic acids of claims 15-17 and 25-28.

Kindly add the following new claims:

33. (New) An isolated nucleic acid molecule obtained by PCR amplification
using primers having the sequences of SEQ ID NO: 13 and SEQ ID NO: 14.

34. (New) An isolated nucleic acid molecule obtained by PCR amplification
using primers having the sequences of SEQ ID NO: 21 and SEQ ID NO: 22.

35. (New) An isolated nucleic acid molecule obtained by amplification using
primers having the sequences of SEQ ID NO: 16 and SEQ ID NO: 18.

36. (New) An isolated nucleic acid molecule obtained by amplification using
primers having the sequences of SEQ ID NO: 16 and SEQ ID NO: 19.

37. (New) An isolated nucleic acid molecule obtained by amplification using
primers having the sequences of SEQ ID NO: 20 and SEQ ID NO: 19.

38. (New) An isolated nucleic acid molecule obtained by 5'-RACE
amplification using primers having the sequences of SEQ ID NO: 15 and SEQ ID NO:

17.